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CBC Newsletter

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 50 May/June 2004 Number 3

Autumn in Augusta

By Paul Koehler

The Carolina Bird Club will hold its fall meeting in Augusta, Georgia, **September 24-26, 2004**. Augusta-Aiken Audubon will be our host for this autumn weekend, which can be a great time of year for birds, butterflies, wildflowers, and more. The Savannah River flows between the Augusta area and South Carolina, acting as a natural funnel during migration periods and creating great birding opportunities on both sides of the river. Come join the fun!

Registration for the meeting will begin at noon on Friday (9/24) and continue through the evening, with necessary information provided for those attending field trips prior to registration. All field trips depart from the hotel parking lots.

Audubon and BirdLife International recognize three Important Bird Areas in the region: Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, Augusta Levee, and Silver Bluff Audubon Sanctuary. Trips are planned to all these sites with hopes of seeing a good mix of species including rails, wading birds (a few straggling Wood Storks may still be present), shorebirds, sparrows, warblers (start studying your fall plumages now!), raptors, and more. We'll also visit the nearby Fort Gordon Army base to catch a glimpse of Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The Augusta area offers plenty for non-birders as well with two National Heritage Areas, art and history museums, antiquing, golf, and many good restaurants.

Hotel and conference accommodations have been arranged in Augusta at the Quality Inn (706-737-5550) and Sleep Inn (706-737-7473), located on Claussen Road, just off Exit 200 from I-20. The hotels are side-by-side with a conference facility between them. Rates, depending on needs, range from $49-$59 per room or 2-room suites available at $82. The Quality Inn features full kitchens and exterior entrances, while the Sleep Inn features micro-fridges and interior entrances. Extended continental breakfasts at each hotel are available beginning at 6 am. Please make your reservations by September 8, and remember to mention the Carolina Bird Club.

A social hour will be held Friday and Saturday beginning at 7 pm with evening programs beginning at 8 pm. Our speaker Friday evening will be Laurel Moore-Barnhill, a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service at the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site. She will provide background to the biology of the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, along with management practices at SRS used to benefit this bird. This will also be a great introduction to the Saturday and Sunday field trips planned to the Fort Gordon RCW sites. On Saturday evening, the National Wild Turkey Federation will give updates on the status of this magnificent bird, along with habitat restoration and education projects undertaken by the NWTF. Their national headquarters is located 30 minutes from our hotels, and their newly expanded museum/ visitor center and trail system would make a great side trip for those interested.

Upcoming CBC Meetings

Atlantic Beach, NC - Jan. 28-30, 2005
Blowing Rock, NC - Spring 2005

Birding Connections *By Karen Bearden*

The connection between people I meet is one of my favorite things about birding. The idea for this article came after Joe and I took a family and birding vacation in New England last fall. While birding at Great Meadows NWR near Boston we met Simon Perkins, Field Ornithologist with Massachusetts Audubon. He leads birding tours and knows Lynn Barber, fellow CBC member (I use her bird illustrations in this newsletter) and recognized Harry LeGrand's name. That same day we met a man wearing a UNC cap (he and his wife went to school in Chapel Hill) and another birder whose brother lives in Durham.

More North Carolina connections continued when we met Jeff Shallow, Director of Vermont Audubon, at the Green Mountain Vermont Nature Center in Huntington, Vermont. Jeff knows our friend, Chris Canfield, Director of Audubon North Carolina. By the way, I highly recommend visiting the Birds of Vermont Museum just down the road from the Nature Center. Bob Sears, 83, has carved 450 species of birds, with a goal to reach 500, and then move on to butterflies! A stunning hand carved Common Loon family is one of the first things you notice as you walk in the front door of the Museum. Along with the life-size bird carving displays there are trails for birding on the property where we had good views of Black-throated Green and Black-throated Blue Warblers.

When Joe and I first began birding we traveled to southeast Arizona. Since many birders visit the same hotspots, we continued seeing familiar faces of birders we had seen at a previous site. After talking with Dave at the Santa Rita Lodge in Madera Canyon, the Patagonia Rest Area, and again at Ramsey Canyon, I asked for his address. Since that time we've stayed in touch by letter, he visited us in Florida, we've been to Ontario to bird with him, plus, we planned a trip to join each other again in Arizona, this time in the Chiricahua Mountains. This spring (we're probably with Dave right now as you read this!) we plan to see Dave in Ontario again on our first trip to Point Pelee and Michigan.

Our first CBC meeting was the January 1998 weekend in Litchfield, SC. One birder we met on our first trip was Stephen Harris. I learned Stephen grew up in Orlando, Florida, like me, and attended the rival high school! That same weekend I was wearing my birding shirt with many patches when Mary McDavit said she had the same Florida Ornithological Society Snail Kite patch. I ordered those for FOS, put an ad in the American Birding Association catalog, and had mailed Mary that patch a year earlier!

I've had many more connections like these through my years of birding. *Maybe you would like to share some of your connections?* As my friend Dave wrote in one of his letters to me: Que les oiseaux soient avec vous (May the birds be with you)!

Soggy, but fun birding in Fontana!

A group of 144 birders endured rain, fog, and high winds as they gathered in Fontana for the spring CBC meeting. Charlotte Goedsche did a great job coordinating the meeting and organizing extra leaders at the last moment for popular field trips. Birders sighted 128 bird species, including 26 species of warblers, Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, Vesper Sparrow, and Black-capped Chickadee. Fred Alsop's program on the birds of the Smokies and Wallace Coffey's entertaining program on his experiences as an amateur ornithologist were a treat. Thanks to everyone who helped make the meeting a success!

Jonathan Mays leads a group to Purchase Knob, photo by Joe Bearden

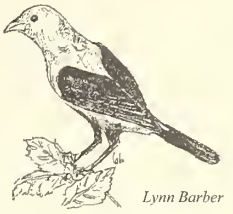
Feathered Features

The **NC Partners In Flight** annual meeting was held March 17, 2004 at Hemlock Bluffs Nature Preserve in Cary, NC. Mark Johns, Coordinator for NC PIF, talked about how the "accomplishments that 'do good things for birds' are wide-reaching and diverse and are the direct result of hundreds of talented individuals in North Carolina. One of the motto's of the NC PIF program is that 'Partnerships Produce Positive Results for Birds'. Hundreds of natural resource managers and citizens were trained in 2003 at over 50 bird identification and methods NC PIF workshops. Management plans were developed to impact hundreds of thousands of acres of habitat through a variety of partnerships with private landowners, government agencies, and corporations. Work continues through a variety of working groups and partnerships to acquire and restore habitat and guide management decisions for birds throughout the state. Dozens of presentations on the NC PIF program were given that reached hundreds of professionals and citizens. International Migratory Bird Day continues to expand in the state and reaches thousands of the general public each year. The program and several of its partners have been recognized with several state and national level awards since 1997, and NC PIF continues to be an important contributor in the process of improving communication, cooperation, and collaboration to further bird conservation in North Carolina and the region."

Just Outside the Window *By Donna Slyce*

He is a distinctive "chip-burrr" from a treetop, a hoarse song of about nine notes repeated at longer intervals than most enthusiastic and testosterone-laden avian singers in spring. A glimpse of outrageous scarlet and jet black sailing quickly from tree to tree, he is best framed by the chartreuse of new spring leaves unfolding. With his neck arched and beak pointing up as he broadcasts his burry ditty over the treetops, he stops for the day to refuel on a long journey from South America to temperate North America.

Scarlet Tanagers are typical, even archetypical, neotropical migrants. They spend the winter in South America, from Colombia south to Ecuador and Peru, and head north in the thick of the landbird migration. They fly up through Central America, and, using the Yucatan Peninsula as a "jumping off" point, cross the Gulf of Mexico. They arrive in northwestern South Carolina in late April and Piedmont North Carolina at the end of April, when a large majority of neotropical migrants pass through the Carolinas. The early date for the species in South Carolina is April 4 but the typical arrival date for northwestern South Carolina is around April 26. Some travel another three weeks to reach their breeding grounds.


Lynn Barber

It is a task the enormity of which is almost impossible to comprehend. A Scarlet Tanager is approximately seven inches long from the tip of beak to tip of tail (more or less the length from the tip of the longest finger to the first crease in the wrist) and weighs about 1.5 ounces prior to migration, having gained about half an ounce in preparation for the long flight. A typical spring migration covers several thousand miles, including five or six hundred miles of open water crossing over the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf of Mexico crossing alone is daunting. It entails a 20 to 24 hour marathon flight over the water that is begun at sunset of one day and ends between mid-afternoon and sunset of the next day. The feat has been compared to a human running a four-minute mile (world record time for the mile is currently 3:46.78) for 80 hours. Only humans don't drown if they fall down while running. The birds will drown if they cease to fly across the Gulf. Mortality among a group of birds crossing the Gulf of Mexico is estimated at 50%. Having successfully crossed the Gulf of Mexico, there are still another 1,000 miles of avian and feline predators, radio towers, thunderstorms, and inhospitable habitat to go for some individuals before they reach the breeding areas.

The thought of thousands of miles of flight and a 24 hour ocean crossing gives new respect for the hidden bird sounding off with a "chip-burrr" from the oak in the backyard, and colors the day with amazement.

Identicus assisticus

Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers Shorebirds are notoriously difficult to identify, especially in non-breeding plumage, and here we have two birds that you would think would be simple to tell apart given their names. After all, one is long billed and the other short billed. Simple huh? Not quite! Bill length is virtually useless in separating the two species since there is considerable overlap .

Let me try to summarize the main features to aid in identifying these engaging shorebirds.

1. Decide whether the bird is in breeding plumage or not and whether it is an adult or a juvenile. Move on to other clues when you have resolved this question.
2. Long-billed Dowitcher females on average are larger and longer-billed than Short-billed Dowitchers of either sex. If you put in enough hours of observation you will become adept at using this size factor as an identifying character.
3. Tail pattern is the most reliable field mark of all. On all dowitchers the tail is barred black and white, or black and cinnamon in breeding plumage. The Long-billed Dowitcher has narrow light bars, less than half as wide as the dark bars; Short-billed Dowitchers have light bars as wide or wider than the dark bars. This feature is readily seen when the bird is preening or flying directly away.
4. In winter plumage the color and pattern of the throat and breast may be helpful clues at close range. Short-bills tend to be lighter overall with fine streaks and speckles extending onto the white upper belly and sides. This contrasts with Long-bills where the coloration is smoother and darker gray, with the color extending further down. These details should be used in conjunction with other clues; rarely are they sufficient to clinch an identification.
5. As with all birds, voice is the one characteristic that will reliably separate one dowitcher from another. The Short-billed Dowitcher has a loud ***tututu*** somewhat reminiscent of the call of a Lesser Yellowlegs. This contrasts sharply with the Long-billed Dowitcher whose call is a high, thin ***keee*** or ***keek.*** As a general rule Long-bills are much more talkative than short-bills and they sometimes emit a harsh, high rattle. Lots of noise coming from a flock is a prima facie indicator of Long-bills; especially from a feeding aggregation. Other than for an occasional ***tu*** feeding Short-bills tend to remain quiet.

This brief attempt at separating these two species is inadequate, but, I hope helpful. Consult the following reference works for excellent coverage of these species:

1. Advanced Birding, Peterson Field Guides, Kenn Kaufman.
2. Shorebirds of the Pacific Northwest, Dennis Paulson.
3. Shorebirds, An Identification Guide, Peter Hayman et al.

Dave lives in Waterloo, Ontario. He completed the seminars in bird biology from Cornell Labratory of Ornithology and went to Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario to study ornithology and environmental science. Dave has been birding since he was eight years old and has birded every continent except Asia and Antarctica.

Short-billed Dowitcher photo by Harry D. Sell

Welcome New CBC Members! **Carol Bowman**-Pinehurst, NC; **Jerry & Pat Bright**-Columbia, SC; **Norman Carroll**-Sundown, TX; **Margaret Cashwell**-Autryville, NC; **Ronald & Lydia Hodgson**-Durham, NC; **Don & Katherine Gerdes**-Asheville, NC; **Bill & Anita Gerling**-Hendersonville, NC; **Susan & Peter Hoadley**-Nashville, TN; **David & Carolyn Johnson**-Swannanoa, NC; **Denise Liberatori & Dan McFatter**-Black Mountain, NC; **Louise Romanow & William Swallow**-Cary, NC; **Marlene Schumm**-Kill Devil Hills, NC; **Lewis Symynkywicz**-Blackstone, MA; **Rosalyn & Victor Walk**-Whispering Pines, NC; **Calvin & Carol Wetmore**-Hendersonville, NC.

CALLING ALL BIRDERS!

By Paul Koehler, Director, Silver Bluff Audubon Center

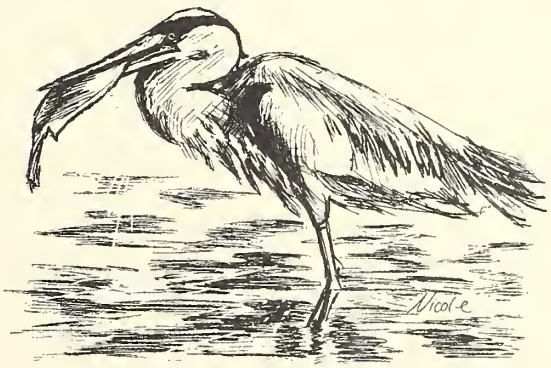
For several years now, the Silver Bluff Audubon Center & Sanctuary has featured a checklist of 198 bird species. Your help is needed to push that total over 200! Silver Bluff is one of the scheduled field trip destinations for the upcoming fall CBC meeting in Augusta, Georgia—but don't wait until then to plan a visit! The summer months at Silver Bluff offer great birding, including Bald Eagle (this year's fledglings and adults), Bachman's Sparrow (easy to find—Scout's honor!), Wood Stork and other waders, shorebirds, kites, woodpeckers, and nuthatches galore. The fields and forests are filled with summer birds. Surely there are two new species that can be found and added to the checklist.

The National Audubon Society owns or operates more than 100 education centers and wildlife sanctuaries across the country, totaling nearly 200,000 acres. Silver Bluff, situated along the Savannah River in Aiken County, South Carolina, protects 3,154 acres of upland pine forest, hardwood bottomlands, open fields, lakes, and streams. In addition to the birds supported by this varied habitat, visitors may see alligators, armadillos, fox squirrels, whitetail deer, or an occasional coyote. The property was bequeathed to Audubon in 1975 from the estate of Floyd Starr, in accordance with his wish that Audubon manage Silver Bluff to encourage wise land use while supporting healthy wildlife populations. An active forest management program provides revenue along with essential wildlife habitat, while the emerging education program provides learning opportunities for all. Over 3,000 local schoolchildren, teachers, and others have learned about nature, in nature, since the new Center opened in the fall of 2002.

A wealth of history is also associated with the Silver Bluff Audubon Center & Sanctuary, including habitation by Native Americans, visits by Hernando de Soto in 1540 and naturalist-explorer William Bartram, a Revolutionary War skirmish, and an 18th century trading post owned by George Galphin. An active archaeology dig has revealed much about life at the trading post, and approximately 140 acres surrounding the site have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. South Carolina Governor James Hammond once owned the Silver Bluff property, and his antebellum plantation home still stands at nearby Redcliffe State Historic Site. The combination of natural, historical, and cultural features at Silver Bluff led to its selection as one of Aiken County's three Discovery Stops along the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor.

Getting back to birds, the federally endangered Wood Stork finds special sanctuary at Silver Bluff. In 1986, 30 acres of subdivided fish ponds were created on the former site of Kathwood Lake, an old cottonseed oil millpond. The ponds were built with funding from the U.S. Department of Energy and now receive assistance (in the form of free fish) from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. During the summer, the Kathwood ponds are drawn down in sequence, concentrating forage fish for the storks. It is a critical resource for the recovery of this endangered species, as evidenced by the numbers. Last year, 435 storks were observed feeding at one time! Throw in a couple hundred egrets and herons and shorebirds attracted to the exposed mud flats, and you get quite a feeding frenzy. Even a Roseate Spoonbill has used the ponds the past two years.

Hopefully, you are intrigued enough to make a visit as well. Regular visitor hours have not yet been determined though, so please call 803-471-0291 for current or additional information.



Nicole White Kennedy

CBC Bonus Field Trips

New River, NC and VA—June 12-13

The New River, which is actually the oldest river system in the North America, flows north from western North Carolina into Virginia. Join our leader, Will Cook, as we explore sections of New River State Park in North Carolina (Saturday) and New River Trail State Park in Virginia (Sunday) in search of the specialty birds of the region. The area is well known for its breeding Warbling Vireos and four species of Empidonax flycatchers. Baltimore Orioles are expected and we'll hope for both Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers and the remote possibility of Black-billed Cuckoo. If there's extra time on Sunday, we may stop on the Blue Ridge Parkway to look for Cerulean Warbler.

Lodging is available in Sparta at the Alleghany Inn (888-372-2501). The best place for camping is Doughton Park. We'll meet at the Alleghany Inn on Saturday, June 12 at 7 am and carpool to the New River. Be sure to bring snacks, drinks, and lunch for both days. Cost of the trip is $10/pp and is limited to 10 people. Contact Will Cook at cwcook@duke.edu or 919-382-9134 to reserve your place prior to sending in your registration form.

Summer Kites in South Carolina—July 24

No, we're not talking about paper kites, although you're certainly welcome to bring one along if you like. We're talking about North America's most graceful and classy raptor, *Elanoides forficatus*, also known as the Swallow-tailed Kite. South Carolina has the world's northern-most nesting population, estimated at between 120-170 pairs, although some strong evidence surfaced last year of possible nesting along the Cape Fear River in the Old North State.

Swallow-tails are well known for foraging together in loose flocks of 10 to 50 birds or more as they hunt over upland fields and pastures for dragonflies and other flying insects. Feeding aggregations take place mostly in mid to late summer from late morning through mid-afternoon. Mississippi Kites are often in company with the Swallow-tails, and the two put on quite an aerial acrobatic show, sometimes an hour or more, worthy of the Blue Angels or the Thunderbirds.

For the past couple of years Allendale County has been the kite hot spot in South Carolina, with flocks of as many as 25-40 birds, and we're hoping they will be back in full force this year. We will headquarter in South Carolina's prettiest town and gateway to the famous ACE Basin, Walterboro, right next to I-95. For those coming some distance, you will probably want to check in Friday night. Here is the motel information:

Hampton Inn (Exit 53) – 843-538-2300
Howard Johnson (Exit 53) – 843-538-5473
Rice Planters Inn in Walterboro – 843-538-8964
Sleep Inn – 843-539-1199
Thunderbird Inn (Exit 53) – 843-538-2503

We'll meet and depart from the Thunderbird Inn on July 24 in Walterboro at 7 am, and should be able to pick up some "southern specialties" along the way such as Painted Bunting and Bachman's Sparrow. The kites don't usually show up until 10 or 11 in the morning. We should arrive back in Walterboro no later than 4 pm. For those that want to stay over through Sunday, there are several spots worth checking out, including ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge and Jacksonboro Nature Trail. The trip is limited to 15 people and costs $10/pp. For more information or to reserve your place for the trip, contact John Cely at 803-782-7450 or jecely@sc.rr.com (night) or 803-419-9645 or jcely@clemson.edu (day), before sending in your registration money.

Shackleford Banks Birding—August 7

Join leader John Fussell on Saturday, August 7, as we take a ferry ride to bird the east Shackleford area along the North Carolina coast. We'll meet at Local Yokels' ferry service on Harkers Island at 7:30 am in order to be prepared to catch the ferry at 8 am. Local Yokels is just off the main road, about one mile past the bridge onto the island. You will see their sign on the right. Harkers Island is about 30 minutes from Morehead City.

With the intertidal habitat, this is a good area for shorebirds. We'll be looking for Marbled Godwit,

Stilt Sandpiper, Reddish Egret, Wilson's Phalarope, and American Oystercatcher. Registration is limited to 12 people at $10/pp paid in advance. Cost of the ferry is $10/pp, which participants will pay at the ferry. Bring fluids and lunch since the trip is expected to end around 2 pm. Sunscreen is highly recommended for this site, along with insect repellent, although insects are rarely a problem in this open environment.

There are many hotels and bed and breakfasts in the Morehead and Beaufort areas to choose from. For more information or to reserve your place for the trip, please contact Karen Bearden at 919-844-9050 or chickadeebirders@earthlink.net before sending in your registration money.

Fall Migration on Edisto Island, SC — September 10-11

Join leaders Marcia Watkins and Bob Wood for fall migration on the South Carolina coast. On Friday, September 10 we'll carpool to dinner by meeting at 7:30 pm at the Holiday Inn Express (843-402-8300) on Savannah Highway (US 17 South) south of Charleston and near the Citadel Mall. Saturday we'll leave at 7 am to venture farther south for a day of birding on and near Edisto Island.

Edisto is one of the largest sea islands in South Carolina. The islands offer sanctuary for migrating birds and views for the traveling birder. Relatively far from civilization, Edisto Beach itself offers a higher ratio of seashells to people than most other beaches in the state.

For those not meeting at the hotel, we'll start the day walking the live oak-draped road to the entrance of Botany Bay Plantation at 7:45 am (where the beach scene in *The Patriot* was filmed). Then we'll bird another wonderful maritime forest just inland from the beach at Edisto State Park. Here, the Indian Mound Trail winds through this dense, ancient oak forest and around the edge of a salt marsh. Warblers anyone? Next we'll briefly check out the beach itself around lunchtime to add Sanderling and pelican to our lists. After a stop by George and Pink's roadside market (for the best boiled peanuts in the Carolinas), we'll end the day at ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge ("Grove Plantation"). Depending on weather patterns, we could get good numbers of Painted Buntings, Wood Storks and other wading birds, warblers, vireos, shorebirds, and raptors.

For those who want to bird again on Sunday, we'll bird Caw Caw Park until about noon. Caw Caw has a wide variety of Lowcountry habitats which provides us with a wide variety of birds anytime of year. Cost of the trip is $10/pp with a limit of 15 people. For more information or to reserve your place for the trip, please contact Marcia Watkins at 803-779-7570 or marcia.watkins@gte.net.

Carolina Bird Club Registration Form

Bonus Field Trips

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening phone _____ Email _____

Registration for each bonus field trip costs $10/pp paid in advance.

Enclosed is my check for $_____ for _____ member(s) to join the **New River, NC & VA - June 12-13 trip.**
Enclosed is my check for $_____ for _____ member(s) to join the **Summer Kites in South Carolina - July 24 trip.**
Enclosed is my check for $_____ for _____ member(s) to join the **Shackleford Banks Birding - August 7 trip.**
Enclosed is my check for $_____ for _____ member(s) to join the **Fall Migration on Edisto Island, SC - Sept. 10-11 trip.**

Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to: CBC, 5009 Crown Point Lane, Wilmington, NC 28409.

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June 12-13 New River, NC & VA
July 24, Summer Kites in South Carolina
August 7, Shackleford Banks Birding
September 10-11, Edisto Beach State Park, SC

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